



CHINA'S NEW FOREIGN POLICY APPROACHES

China has become the world's second largest economy as a result of its sustainable and high economic growth. With its political, economic and military developments over the past few years, China is stepping forward to being a global superpower rather than a gradually rising country. Being the only superpower after the Cold War, the United States' geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-strategic impact have weakened in the past few years, whereas China's regional and global impact, as well as its economic growth have increased. It can be stated that in many parts of the world China is filling the geopolitical gap left by the U.S., and due to various initiatives China is regarded as an important alternative to the U.S. both economically and diplomatically.

As a result of the changes in China's global position, the course of Beijing's foreign policy system has also reached a crucial stage. China, which pursued an independent and peaceful foreign policy focusing on the economic growth, over the last five years has pursued an active foreign policy by increasing its political, economic, diplomatic and cultural ties in the region and in the world. In particular, the Beijing government led by Chinese President Xi Jinping, has a foreign policy approach that seeks to play a more active role in all regional and global developments, especially in China's immediate neighborhood. Thus, in 2013, China called for a new type of international relations oriented towards win-win cooperation, advancing its diplomatic agenda in a comprehensive, multilevel, multifaceted way. During the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) held in October 2017, it was declared that China entered a new era of socialism and that the country would follow the great power diplomacy. The concept of "Great Power Diplomacy with Chinese characteristics", which was officially proposed by Beijing, can be said to be an important change that marks China's quest for global hegemony.

In the context of China's changes in its foreign policy system, the country is also carrying out related reforms in its foreign policy structure. The first thing to be mentioned is the elevation of the status of the highest level institution responsible for diplomacy in the CPC Central Committee. Specifically, in March 2018, upon the decision of the CPC Central Committee, the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group of the CPC Central Committee was replaced by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the CPC Central Committee. In addition, during the first session of the 13th National People's Congress in March 2018, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was appointed as the State Councillor. The elevation of Chinese Foreign Minister, who is also a member of the CPC Central Committee, to one of the five current members of the State Council of China, is quite rare in China's political structure. The decisions made by the Beijing administration have shown that China will place more emphasis on foreign policy in the coming years.

It is worth noting that China has been focusing on soft power policy in its new foreign policy approach. Today, Beijing's most important soft power tools are the Confucius Institutes and Chinese Cultural Centers, which are established to popularize the Chinese language and

culture throughout the world. According to Chinese data, by the end of 2017, China has established a total of 525 Confucius Institutes and 1113 Confucian classes in 146 countries of the world, including 173 in Europe, 161 in America, 118 in Asia, 54 in Africa and 19 in Oceania. Currently, there are 35 Chinese Cultural Centers in the world, while in 2020 this figure is expected to reach 50. Moreover, in recent years the Chinese government has been implementing a variety of scholarships and support programs for foreign students who study in China, such as the China State Scholarship, Silk Road Scholarship and Confucius Institute Scholarship. According to the Chinese Ministry of Education, in 2017, the number of foreign students studying in the country under the Chinese scholarship programs has reached 58,600.

In addition, the activities of the famous Chinese businessmen can be regarded as a new feature of China's public diplomacy. The most prominent example of this new trend in China's public diplomacy is Jack Ma, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, and one of the richest men in China or even in the world. He held bilateral talks with the leaders of many countries, including former U.S. President Barack Obama. Jack Ma's meeting with the U.S. President Donald Trump in February 2017 was an important topic for debate on China's public diplomacy. Moreover, the fact that during the South African tour in August 2017, Jack Ma launched the \$10 million African Young Entrepreneurs Fund made a significant contribution to China's increasing influence in Africa.

Thus, the Beijing administration's self-confidence in the international arena with new foreign policy approaches is based on China's economic, political and military successes, as well as geostrategic priorities. First of all, China's active approach in its foreign policy can be expressed as reflections of the country's economic dynamics to foreign policy. Indeed, the One Road One Belt initiative, which was put on agenda in 2013 for China's geostrategic and geoeconomic interests, contributes greatly to the country's regional and global economic influence. In 2016, a total of \$493 billion was invested in 66 countries' infrastructure projects launched within the framework of the One Road One Belt route, and one-third of it belongs to China. In 2017, China invested \$20.17 billion in 59 countries participating in projects under the One Road One Belt. In 2017, China's foreign direct investment (FDI) flows exceeded \$158.29 billion placing the country third in the world ranking, while China's total FDI stock by the end of 2017 reached \$1,809 trillion. China's rapidly growing GDP grew by 6.6% to \$12.76 trillion in 2017, and by 2050, it is expected to surpass the U.S. reaching about \$44 trillion. From this point of view, the growing global influence of the Chinese economy is reinforcing the foreign policy of the country.

Another basis of China's proactive foreign policy approach is its recent military developments. Since 2015, China has boosted the military structure of the Chinese army and military modernization by deepening the national defense and military reforms, and has made new developments of strategic importance in the

defense industry. Besides transport and strategic importance in Africa, the establishment of China's first overseas military base in 2017 in Djibouti, which also hosts military bases of the U.S., France and Japan, can be considered as the most important milestone in the country's military development. During the 19th National Congress of the CPC, it was announced that the Chinese army would be equipped with new weapons by 2035 and would be the strongest army in the world by 2050.

On the other hand, it can be said that the new national strategic priorities set by the Beijing administration are reflected in the country's foreign policy. According to the long-term, two-stage development plan for 2020-2050 declared by Beijing in 2017, China will implement the first phase of socialist modernization in the period from 2020 to 2035, and will become a great modern socialist country with strong, democratic and advanced culture in the period from 2035 to 2050. The fact that Xi called for "building a community of common destiny" from the perspective of China's future goals and emphasized China's "strong state, strong army, strong nation and strong diplomacy", indicates China's intention to influence the global arena.

In summary, China's foreign policy approach in the coming period will depend on the country's political, economic and military developments as well as its national strategic objectives. In the future China's neighborhood policy will remain one of the priorities in the country's foreign policy, as China is the country that has one of the most neighboring countries in the world with 14 land neighbors and 8 maritime neighbors. The Asia-Pacific and Central Asia region, where most of China's neighbors are located, are among the regions of great strategic importance in geoeconomic and geopolitical terms. The Asia-Pacific region, which hosts the most important sea routes in the world, is also known as the region where China faces the biggest problems. From this point of view, the direction of China's relations with the Asia-Pacific countries can directly affect China's general foreign policy. At the same time, rich underground resources of Central Asia located on the historical and modern Silk Road route are extremely important for China. Because along with the excess production problem the country has a growing demand for energy and natural resources in the course of high economic growth. It can be assumed that in the coming period China's foreign policy will form the basis of a new model, which can also be called "post-American world order". As is well known, China is actively involved in Western international organizations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Moreover, the country leads regional and international organizations such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, BRICS, Cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European Countries, China-Africa Summit, China-Latin America Summit and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Within the framework of China's new foreign policy approach, it can be stated that Beijing's geopolitical activities within these institutions will also increase.

Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

- Salome Zurbashvili won a runoff of the presidential election in Georgia becoming the country's first woman president. She was backed by the ruling Georgian Dream party and gained 59.52% of the vote in the race against opposition candidate Grigol Vashadze who received 40.48%. The turnout exceeded 56%.
- In response to Russia's seizure of three Ukrainian vessels in the Sea of Azov, Verkhovna Rada approved an edict of President Poroshenko imposing martial law in the country's 10 border regions for 30 days starting from November 28, 2018. Ukraine also banned Russian men aged 16-60 from entering the country, with the exception being made only for "humanitarian cases" such as funerals.
- Astana hosted the 11th round of Syria peace talks between the representatives of Iran, Russia, Turkey, the Syrian government and armed opposition. The parties examined the situation in the Idlib de-escalation area and agreed to step up joint efforts to launch a Constitutional Committee in Geneva.
- The Geneva Conference on Afghanistan, co-hosted by the UN and the Afghan government, brought together delegates from 61 countries and 35 international organizations. Participants underlined the need to deepen regional cooperation in all spheres and welcomed the holding of the first Afghan-led parliamentary elections in October 2018.
- Tokyo hosted the 13th Senior Officials Meeting of the "Central Asia plus Japan" Dialogue, during which the parties discussed mutual practical cooperation in the areas of regional security, trade and investment, agriculture, transport and logistics, paying particular attention to promoting tourism. The parties also reviewed the agenda and the final document of the upcoming 7th Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Dialogue to be held in Dushanbe in December 2018.
- Uzbekistan became a participant of the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (IPA), joining nine other CIS member states. Nigmatilla Yuldashev, the chairman of the Senate, the upper house of the Uzbek Supreme Assembly (Oliy Majlis), signed the organization's convention at the 48th meeting of the CIS IPA Council held in St. Petersburg.
- During the meeting with head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov visiting Baku, President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev noted that cooperation with the North Caucasus republics of the Russian Federation contributes to the strengthening of Azerbaijan-Russia relations. Aliyev accepted Kadyrov's invitation to visit Chechnya.

Economy, Finance, and Energy

- The prime ministers of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) member states held a meeting of the Eurasian Intergovernmental Council in Minsk. The participants discussed such issues as the implementation of the digital agenda, harmonization of excise duties on alcohol and tobacco, as well as the removal of internal trade barriers.
- During his visit to Turkmenistan, Chairman of Gazprom's Management Committee Alexey Miller met with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The parties reportedly discussed conditions for resuming Turkmen gas supplies to Russia. The 2003 contract concluded for 25 years may become a basis for renewed cooperation.
- The government of Uzbekistan announced the agenda for the next phase of its economic reforms (2019-2021). The reform roadmap contains five major priorities: 1) maintaining macroeconomic stability; 2) accelerating market transition; 3) strengthening social protection; 4) strengthening the government's role; and 5) preserving environmental sustainability.
- The International Conference of Ministers of Transport of the States Parties to the Agreement on Transit and Transport Cooperation (Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) was held in the Avaza National Tourist Zone in the city of Turkmenbashi. The participants discussed interstate cooperation in the development of the international Lapis Lazuli transport corridor.
- Georgia's capital hosted the first Tbilisi International Night Time Economy Forum. Relevant officials, professionals and experts from nine countries discussed the role of urban planning and culture management in the development of sustainable night-time economies.
- The Belarus-Kazakhstan intergovernmental commission for trade and economic cooperation held its meeting in Minsk to discuss prospects of industrial, agricultural, transport, infrastructure and investment cooperation. Among other things, the parties expressed intention to launch a joint production of unmanned aerial vehicles.
- The Tajik government and the Asian Development Bank signed a \$35 million grant agreement to help reconnect Tajikistan's electricity grid to the Central Asian Power System through interconnection with Uzbekistan's system and expand regional energy trade. The total cost of the project to be completed in 2022 is \$40 million, \$5 million of which will be provided by Tajikistan.

Society and Culture

- The 109th session of the Council of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) voted to approve Uzbekistan's application to become the IOM's 173rd member. Being the most populous and most migrant-sending country of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is the last regional state to join the organization.
- Istanbul hosted two separate international conferences on mediation. The 2nd Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States Conference on Mediation focused on future activities of the OIC Contact Group of Friends of Mediation formed by Turkey. The 5th Istanbul Mediation Conference was devoted to enhancing the practice of mediation for sustaining peace.
- The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage inscribed the epic culture, folk tales and music of Dede Qorqud / Korkyt Ata / Dede Korkut shared by Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkey on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In addition, the committee inscribed traditional spring festive rites of Kazakh horse breeders on the list.
- Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan signed an agreement in Ashgabat to simplify the visa regime for participants of international transportation on their territories. The simplification of visa procedures is expected to lead to the increase in cargo transit, as well as other improvements in trade and economic relations.
- The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan announced that the country would ban the use of disposable plastic bags up to 20 microns thick. It is estimated that an average Azerbaijani citizen uses more than 1,000 plastic bags and generates 24 kg of plastic waste annually.
- The National Museum of Kazakhstan organized the "Eurasian Utopia: Post Scriptum" exhibition at the Suwon iPark Museum of Art in South Korea. The exhibition showcasing over 100 works by 57 artists of the Soviet period and contemporary times will last until March 3, 2019.
- Days of Tajikistan's Culture were organized in Doha, Qatar's capital. The event featured Tajik singers and dancers, as well as an exhibition of works of painters, photographers and craftspeople. In addition, Days of Kazakhstan's culture were held in Ashgabat presenting an exhibition of the Kazakh material and cultural heritage, and a rich concert program.